

November 6th, 2015

Dear Mr. Briel,

I have spent my entire 35 year career in the surgical suite. I started as a Surgical Technologist in 1980 and received my nursing degree and license in 1984. I have worked in the operating rooms of Lincoln and the Los Angeles area. In 1991 I found my calling to educate Surgical Technologists and I worked my way to the department chair position.

My program provides an online option for students in Nebraska. While evaluating my online students, I have visited close to every hospital in the state of Nebraska that has a working operating room. I feel that I can provide an accurate appraisal of what the typical Nebraska surgical team looks like. Within the larger cities of this state there is no question the Certified Surgical Technologist is a vital member of the surgical team and is present at each table.

I wish I could say the same for smaller areas of this great state. I have witnessed RN's, LPN's and even individuals without any education, standing at the OR bed with the surgeons. Those individuals all qualify as OJT's which are people that have been "on the job" trained. I have gone through an RN program and can attest that nurses are not given any surgical related training, so they too fall into the OJT classification.

The difference between an OJT and a Certified Surgical Technologist is the CST has completed an AAS degree that contained 39 academic college credits and 69 credits that solely focus on surgery and the surgical patient. This highly specialized training creates the vital team member that every surgeon depends on to help them provide the perfect surgical experience for their patients.

I have witnessed Surgeons and other Certified Surgical Technologists' having to compensate or correct those OJT individuals to the point where it became a huge distraction and at times a danger within that surgical procedure. I fear for the innocent individual who finds themselves at the mercy of a surgical team that is not educated to the degree that person deserves.

Certified Surgical Technologists' have been educated within Lincoln and Omaha at a rate that has easily supplied enough team members. With the Online program at SCC that supports the entire state of Nebraska, I strongly believe we are primed and ready to meet the need for more Certified Surgical Technologists in the state of Nebraska.

This practice of not identifying the necessity of the Certified Surgical Technologists as a vital part of the surgical team has gone on far too long. I believe that this lack of identification is not due to negligence but to the lack of access to surgery by those who possess the power to recognize professionals. I feel that the licensure of Certified Surgical Technologists in the state of Nebraska will help take another step toward the protection of the surgical patients of Nebraska.

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